

RELIGION IN COMMON LIFE.

By Rev. W. T. Herridge, D.D.

It is only by the faithful discharge of present duty that we can hope to fit ourselves for something higher. Every honest workman is a preacher of righteousness, and helps to check those disintegrating forces which would soon rend society asunder. At the same time, he is also strengthening his own faculties, enlarging his knowledge, and deepening his conscientiousness. Many of the heroes of the Bible story were called from menial tasks to the prosecution of the more exalted service which has made their names immortal. Moses in the land of Midian, keeping the flocks of Jethro; Gideon threshing wheat by the wine-press near the oak of Ophrah; David in the forest intent on his pastoral care; Elisha ploughing with his yoke of oxen; Daniel, the slave at the court of Babylon; the prophet Amos among the herdsmen of Tekoa; Matthew sitting despised at the receipt of custom; the first disciples, humble though hardy fishermen on the Galilean lake—these are some of the great ones who have taught us that he who is faithful over a few things, some day may be made ruler over many things.

When the Perfect Man uttered those pregnant words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," He glorified human toil by the example of a toiling God. It is true that Christ did not need, as we do, to summon His energies into channels of useful service lest they should be dissipated by idleness. Absolute rectitude and unselfish love were the very breath of His life. Yet it would be a mistake to suppose that He was unconscious of any other alternative. Who can miss the inspiring significance of the lowly manger, the simple home of Nazareth, the fearless contact with reproach and reviling, the steadfast refusal to be any other than the best kind of Messiah for Israel, the determined setting of His face towards Jerusalem though many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more, the mock trial, the lonely garden, the cruel martyrdom, and then the triumph over the powers of darkness, the resurrection, the ascension to God's right hand, eternally enthroned because of His grand fidelity and the magnificent inheritance of blessing it brings to all mankind?

The whole career of Jesus proves that, if our religion is to be vindicated at all, it must be vindicated among the scenes of each passing day. He did not hate the world, but the worldly spirit. It was not its work that He despised, nor any natural joy or sorrow in it, but sordid purposes, ignoble ambitions, corrupt and selfish hearts. He taught that religion is a thing of the streets, not of the stars, and instead of purging that His disciples might be taken out of the world, He prayed rather that they should be kept from the civil. At different times the experiment has been tried of seeking the highest type of spirituality in isolation from the usual scenes of life. But it must not be forgotten that into every solitude we take ourselves, and so create a little world, good or bad, in harmony with our own character. It is the will of God for most of us, at least, that in the midst of the tumult of actual affairs we should strive to develop a stalwart and heroic Christianity. If behind the most common toil we feel the fervor of Duty "stern daughter of the voice of God," we shall be sure to realize with increasing force the solemn joy of living, and shall prepare ourselves, when the time comes, for a place among

"The soldier-saints who, row on row,
Burn upward each to his point of bliss,
Since, the end of life being manifest

He had burned his way through the world to this."

It doth not yet appear what we shall be. But it will appear in proportion as we obey the self-revealing laws of honest labor in the sight of God. To suppose that we must balance the true interests of this world against those of the next one is to miss the significance of both. It is not in beautiful day-dreams that we feel most the powers of the great hereafter. It is in the faithful discharge of the tasks now before us that there dawns not only a consciousness of the dignity of this present life, but of the need of immortal life to bring to completion the magnificent powers of humanity. The brooding heavens hang over us as we bend to our daily toil, bright with hope and promise to him that overcometh.

CHRISTMAS ECHOES.

By "Bennie Bræe."

Christmas music fills the air,
There's joy and gladness everywhere,
Again we celebrate the morn
That Christ in Bethlehem was born.
Jesus, we would bow before Thee,
Worship, reverence, love, adore Thee.

Shepherds guarding sheep by night,
Saw the heavens filled with light,
Heard the angel choirs sing,
And the hills their echoes ring.
Jesus, we would hear the story
That has filled the earth with glory.

"Fear ye not," the angels sang,
"Peace on earth" their voices rang.
"Good tidings now to you I bring,
For unto you is born a King."
Jesus, we would own Thy way
And Thy voice we would obey.

Lo, the wise men saw Thy star,
And came to worship from afar;
Our Saviour in His cradle bare
Rejoiced their presents rich and rare.
Jesus, we would bow before Thee,
Take our hearts, Lord, we adore Thee
Ottawa.

ORGANIZATION AND METHODS:
THE CONGREGATION.

1 Chron. 16: 29; Num. 9: 13.

By Rev. Dr. B. MacTavish, Toronto.

In educating and directing a congregation along the line of missionary activity a threefold aim must be kept in view:—

1. To give information. Facts and impressions must be presented, and these must be so related to the purpose of Christ in this age as to produce missionary conviction.

2. To have the idea of stewardship realized. Giving is largely a matter of habit, and, like all habits, if it is to be strong, it must begin early. But it cannot mature in a normal way unless we recognize our relation to Christ as His stewards.

3. To lay upon the hearts of the young the obligation to missionary service. In view of the vast need and the marvelous opportunities, every young Christian should face the question, Does God want me in the missionary field?

The above being the threefold aim to be kept in view, the question naturally follows, How can a congregation be so organized as to accomplish these results?

Congregations differ greatly in size and conditions, but there are general principles and methods which apply to all congregations alike. As a matter of fact, smaller congregations, and congregations in the country, have been most successful in missionary organization.

Haphazard methods that create a spurious excitement, and draw forth a reluctant offering are becoming a thing of the past. Fantastic missions and fantastic appeals and methods of raising funds no longer commend themselves. The true missionary education of a congregation should lead the people, old and young, to respond to duty, and not merely to emotional missionary appeals.

A congregation may be classified, according to age, into three divisions. (1) The children. (2) The young people. (3) The mature members. A proper organization will recognize the difference in these three classes, and will adapt methods and training to the peculiar conditions of each.

The general organization has been most successfully managed by a Missionary Association, with an executive committee that oversees and carries on the work. This executive should, with the officers, be partly chosen by the congregation, and have, in addition, members elected to it by the Sabbath School and the Young People's Societies. This executive would be a sort of Cabinet Council to receive reports, devise and carry out plans, and, generally, to oversee all missionary interests in the congregation. We take it for granted that the pastor is in active sympathy; he should be honorary president. The president should be a man fully alive, and one who has

already shown his missionary interest. A diligent, painstaking secretary-treasurer is most indispensable.

Suppose the committee is organized. At its monthly or quarterly gathering for business, what are some of the problems and questions it has to consider?

1. What methods should be adopted in the Sabbath school to increase missionary interest?

(a) Is the Missionary Question in the Teachers' and Scholars' Lesson Helps studied by the scholars and commented on by the teacher each Sunday?

(b) What plans can be made for special missionary lessons during the year?

(c) Can pictures or photographs of missionary work be obtained, and explained to the classes in turn? Or, better still, can lantern slides be used?

(d) Can more live missionary books for the library be secured and attention called to them by the superintendent and teachers?

(e) Do all the givings of the school go to the missionary schemes of the church? If not, why not?

2. What are the Young People's Societies in the congregation doing to promote missionary interest?

(a) Are they planning carefully for missionary meetings and making them interesting?

(b) Are they carrying on any missionary study classes? With what success?

(c) Are they securing, little by little, a carefully selected missionary library? Is it used?

(d) Have they some definite object to which they contribute? Do they correspond with missionaries on the field, in whom they are especially interested?

(e) Have they a prayer list of missionaries whom they specially remember, and also a wall list of those who have gone out from the congregation as missionaries?

(f) Do they adopt systematic methods of giving?

3. What is the general interest in the congregation and how may it be increased?

(a) Are sermons preached frequently on missionary themes?

(b) Are returned missionaries heard?

(c) Are letters from the field read to the congregation?

(d) Is the congregation supporting a special missionary at home or abroad?

(e) Is the official missionary organ of the church carefully distributed and used?

(f) Is there a systematic method of giving, weekly or monthly?

(g) Is an effort made to secure contributions from all the members?

(h) Are monthly missionary meetings for prayer and discussion of missionary themes planned for and carried out?

These are not fanciful questions, but subjects that are being discussed and methods in operation in many congregations to-day. I see no reason why such an organization as is suggested may not grapple with these problems and, in time, make any congregation truly missionary.

PRAYER.

O God, Thy will be done. Death is not in Thee, Thou living One. There is no grave in heaven; there is no night there—no dark, less death; even the first shadow is not allowed to darken the land,—how, then, shall the great death-gloom spread over it, and fill it with sevenfold night? In Thy land of rest there is no night, no death, no sin, no sea, no need of the moon; no need of the sun, nor of the moon; for the Lamb is the light thereof. He said, "I am the light of the world." He is the light of all worlds, and the light of all ages, and in Him is no darkness at all. We call him Lord, Saviour, Son of man, Son of God, God the Son—the express image of that which is to us invisible.

A great many people blame their bad habits on the sins of their ancestors, when a little more grace would cure both their morals and their manners. The excuse of heredity is largely overworked.